**Anglo-Saxon Notes**

**(449-1066)**

**Timeline:**

* Roman rule ends when the Roman armies living in Britain return to Rome to defend its crumbling empire
* Jutes, Angles, and Saxons (Germanic [northern Germany, Denmark, and northern Holland] tribes) invade forcing the Celts into Wales. They never try to conquer Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall.
* With the invasion, the Anglo-Saxons brought their pagan religions and much of what was Roman was replaced with their own styles.
* King Arthur (a Celt) lives around 537
* Saint Augustine arrives from Rome in 597 and soon thereafter most of the country is converted to Christianity
* 637—Venerable Bede is born (English historian and prose writer)
* Beowulf (an oral English epic) is composed around 700
* 787—the Vikings (Danes) begin invading and conquer most of the country
* 871—Alfred the Great begins rule and thwarts Vikings in 879
* Alfred the Great initiates the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* in 892 (a year-by-year account of the time period written in Anglo-Saxon [Old English])
* By 954 England is united under one king, Edred
* Edward the Confessor rules from 1042-1066 and when he leaves no heir, William of Normandy defeats the Anglo-Saxons at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 and a new era begins

**Life**:

* Roman structures were in ruins, so wooden houses replaced them; 2 or 3 families at first, then larger
* Stone churches were built
* Monasteries
* Farming society, but highly militarized
* Sea-going
* Great communal halls (mead halls)
* Punishment for crimes was severe and quick

**Beliefs**:

* Early, the Anglo-Saxons were pagans and believed in many gods
* Buried with property (inc. slaves) to take to the afterlife
* Augustine and other missionaries converted most of the country over the two centuries following 597; many churches and monasteries were built
* Monasteries were the center of learning; copying manuscripts and writing books, etc.
* **Wyrd** (ruled by fate)—heroes won immortality through fame by tales

**Literature**:

* Oral literature passed on by “scops” through poetry
* A favorite was *Beowulf* written down in the 8th century for the first time
* The lyre accompanied the story telling
* Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (around 700 in Latin)
* *Exeter Book* (975)—lyric poetry
* *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (892)—written by King Alfred was the first historic record written in Old English